

The LAY-MONK.

*Deos qui novit agrestes
Panaque, Silvanumque senem, Nymphasque sorores. Virg.
Ad subitas Thracum volucres nubemque sonoram
Pigmæus parvis currit bellator in armis. Juv.*

WEDNESDAY, November 25. 1713.

THE Reader of this Discourse will not, I imagine, want to be inform'd that the Author of it is Dr. LACON, a Member of our Fraternity.

When we contemplate the admirable Fertility of Nature, that has produc'd such an immense Stock of Beings endow'd with Life and Sense in this narrow Planet, where every Plant and Animal breed numberless Insects, every Drop of Water and Piece of Earth is a Nest of minute living Creatures, and a little Pepper-Corn is crouded, like a populous City, with Inhabitants, we cannot but conclude that the Regions above are equally peopled; unless we can conceive that the bright and spacious Globes of Heaven were only made for the Service of this little obscure Spot, or that the Author was not able, or was unwilling to exert more Power and Goodness in creating proper Animals, to fill the noblest, as well as the meanest Parts of the Creation.

As the innumerable Multitudes of living Creatures that replenish the wide Frame of Nature, demonstrate the Power of the Divine Author, so his Wisdom and free Principle of Activity shine in the endless Variety of Brute and Intelligent Beings, that in a regular and beautiful Subordination gradually descend from the highest Angel to the basest Insect. He might, had he pleas'd, have form'd all his Creatures of the most perfect Order. It is as easy for the Supreme Cause to make a Sun, as a Glow-worm; at the Beck of his Will a Seraph is as ready to break away from Darkness and Nothing, and spring up into Existence, as the meanest Fly. But he acted like a prudent arbitrary Cause, and consulted Order, Harmony and Beauty, by making so many Creatures of such various Ranks and Degrees of Excellence.

Nothing is more surprizing and delightful, than to observe the Scale or gradual Ascent from Minerals to Plants, from Plants to Animals, and from Animals to human Nature. 'Tis easy to distinguish these Kinds, till you come to the highest of one, and the lowest of that next above it; and then the Difference is so nice, that the Limits and Boundaries of their Species seem left unsettled by Nature, to perplex the curious, and to humble the proud Philosopher.

As Man, who approaches nearest to the lowest Class of Celestial Spirits, (for we may justly sup-

pose a Subordination in that excellent Order) being half Body and half Spirit, becomes the *Æquator*, that divides in the Middle the whole Creation, and distinguishes the Corporeal from the Invisible Intellectual World; so the Ape or Monkey, that bears the greatest Similitude to Man, is the next Order of Animals below him. Nor is the Disagreement between the basest Individuals of our Species and the Ape or Monkey so great, but that were the latter endow'd with the Faculty of Speech, they might perhaps as justly claim the Rank and Dignity of the human Race, as the *Salvage Hotentot*, or stupid Native of *Nova Zembla*.

I shall observe one Thing here, which perhaps has not been taken Notice of, that is, the Variety of many Species included in one, which at once seem distinct and the same. If the Idea of a Lion or a Bear are compar'd, they are immediately pronounc'd to be of a different Species, there being no intermediate Degrees of like Animals, to suspend the Mind's Determination. But if we compare a Lion with a Cat, and observe the Similitude between them in their external Figure, and inward Structure of Parts, which in both is the same; together with their Instincts and Actions, 'tis hard to tell if their Difference is essential. How does the Author, upon one simple Ground of the Cat-Nature, vary and run curious Divisions thro' the *Domestick*, the *Civet* and *Mountain Cat*, to the *Leopard*, the *Panther* and the *Tyger*, 'till we come to the King of Beasts. Nor is the Climax or Gradation less surprizing, while our Contemplation rises from the *Hedge-hog* or *Guinea-Pig*, thro' several Sorts of Swine, to the *Chamois*, whose Snout is extended to a Probois of such Length, that the Animal takes up his Meat, and feeds himself with it, and from thence to the *Elephant*, the Prince of the Swine Race. But this seeming Indistinction and Confusion of Species is no where more remarkable than in the Ape; wonderful is the Variety of these Creatures, which are so like to one another, and yet so different, that 'tis hard to determine whether their Species are distinct or not.

The most perfect of this Order of Beings, the *Orang Outang*, as he is call'd by the Natives of *Angola*, that is, the *Wild Man*, or *Man of the Woods*, has the Honour of bearing the nearest Resemblance to human Nature; tho' all that Species have some Agreement with us in our Features, many Instances being found of Men of Monkey-Faces; yet this has the greatest Likeness, not only

only in his Countenance, but in the Structure of his Body, his Ability to walk upright, as well as on all four; his Organs of Speech, his ready Apprehension, and his gentle and tender Passions, which are not found in any of the Ape Kind, and in various other Respects.

This Contemplation has led me on to reflect, how a particular Race of Gods, and another of Men, have deriv'd their imaginary Existence from the wild Animals last mention'd.

The Priests, Poets and fabulous Historians among the ancient Pagans, conspiring to practise upon the Ignorance, Credulity and superstitious Fears of the People, impos'd upon 'em numerous Gods, Creatures of their own Fancy; and having first plentifully fill'd the Skies, with a choice Collection of imagin'd Deities, they provided Country Gods of a low and ordinary Rank, for the Forrests, Fields and Fountains, which they borrow'd from the Ape or Monkey Nation: There is the highest Probability, that the *Tauni*, and the *Dryades*, the *Satyr* and the *Sphinx*, *Sylvanus*, *Sylenus*, and *Pan* himself, and all the rest of their sacred Elfs, and woodland Divinities, as well as the Nymphs, the Fairy-like Goddesses of the Lakes and Rivers, who are of no higher Station and Authority than our King *Oberon* and Queen *Mab*, were nothing else than some of these Man-like Inhabitants of the Wood, consecrated by designing Men, and complemented with religious Worship.

And as this inferior and pautry Order of Deities were only Apes and Monkeys, dignify'd with divine Titles; so a Race of Men, call'd *Pigmies*, in whom the Frame of human Bodies is abridg'd, and express'd in Miniature, owe their imaginary Being to the same Original. *Homer*, having describ'd the Shouts and Clamours of the *Trojan* Army falling on the *Greeks*, from the Noise made by the *Cranes* ready to engage their Enemies, in an elegant Figure calls their Foes, *διδεξαι πυγμαίους*, that is, *Pygmean Men*.

The first *Greek* Historians, who often broke thro' the Bounds of Modesty, Decency and Credibility, to propagate a fabulous Story, which they embellish'd with all the Ornaments that a wanton and fertile Fancy could suggest, took and improv'd this Hint of the Poet, and rais'd from it a diminutive Nation, where each Individual was a little Epitome or Abbreviation of Man; which, as said before, they call'd *Pigmies*: They represented them as Persons of a stomachful Disposition and martial Inclinations, tho' but a Cubit and a half or two Cubits in Stature; and to gratify their Military Genius, they engag'd them in endless Quarrels and bloody Wars, with their implacable Enemies the *Cranes*: I do not find there were any Infantry in their Armies, which were wholly compos'd of these little Troopers: When the fierce Generals lead them forth to Battle, some Authors mount them on Partridges, which sure must have been as excessive in Bigness, as the Riders were defective; but other Historians have, in my Opinion, with more Judgment, set 'em on the Backs of Rams and Goats: These Authors, no doubt, were mightily pleas'd to give the Relation of their Campaigns and heroick Atchievements; and it would be diverting enough, to see an Engagement between this dwarfish Race of Men, and the long-neck'd Squadrons of the Enemy; upon such a Description, the Reader could not but be

delighted to figure in his Imagination a furious Battle fought by such enrag'd Armies, and to fancy how here a wing'd Battalion of *Cranes* were put into Disorder, and there a *Pygmean* Squadron, with great Slaughter, routed and put to flight; sometimes to see a wounded Crane fall dead at the Feet of the little Conqueror, and sometimes a Pigmy Officer caught up, like a Chicken by a Kite, and carry'd thro' the Air, wrything and struggling in the Pounces of his Enemy: But to this Day, the Country where this small body'd Nation inhabits, has not been found out by any Travellers. No *Columbus* ever yet discover'd this World of human Animals of such a contracted Size. 'Tis true, as there have been Giants, or Men exceeding the ordinary Bulk and Stature, so there have in all Ages been Dwarfs of an incredible Sinallness, that look'd like moving Puppets, tho' they were really a concise Abstract of our Species: But as there never was known in any Age a whole Nation of Giants, so there was never discover'd a Country wholly inhabited by Dwarfs, these not being the ordinary Productions, but either the Sport of Nature, or Deviations from her customary Course: It must be allow'd, there was a real Foundation, that gave Birth to this ludicrous Fable. The *Cranes* coming in numerous Flights, as *Aristotle* affirms, from the Regions of *Scythia* every Winter to the Lakes in *Egypt*, near the *Nile*, the Apes and Monkeys, not out of Thirst of Glory, or to enlarge their Dominions, but from a natural warrantable Instinct to satisfy their Hunger, made Incurfions on them to rob their Nests of their Eggs, and devour their young; the *Cranes* on the other Hand, as Nature furnishes all Creatures with Courage, even those who exert none upon any other Provocation, to defend their tender Offspring, made a vigorous Resistance, and many a sharp Action might ensue upon such Occasions; and *Homer*, as I said before, alluding to these Fights of the *Cranes* and *Monkeys*, and expressing the Noise of an Army eager to engage, by the Cries of these Birds when they attack'd their Foes, which by an agreeable and beautiful Figure he call'd *Pygmean Men*, gave an Occasion to the Prolifick Wit of *Greece*, to produce this fabulous Nation. This therefore is no Fiction of *Homer*, as some believe: His *Pigmies* were Apes like Men, and probably of the most perfect Order above describ'd; but were improv'd to real Men by Romantick Writers. If this Account be allow'd, all the Disputes of the Learned about this diminutive Race are reconcil'd.

N. B. It being one End propos'd by the Society in this Paper, to cultivate a Conversation with the Absent, by which Means, they may at once relieve and improve their Retirement; all Gentlemen who will be pleas'd to communicate their Thoughts for the forwarding of our Design, are desired to direct their Letters, paying the Postage, to Mr. Jacob Ravenscroft, to be left at Mrs. Baldwin's in Warwick-Lane.

Note, Mr. Freeman makes the same Invitation to the Ladies.

This Paper will come out every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and may be had at Mr. Harrison's by the Royal Exchange; Mrs. Dodd's and Mrs. Boulter's without Temple-Bar; and Mrs. Bond's at Charing Cross.



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